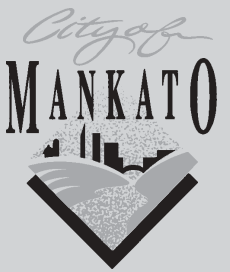


Dedicated to quality public service

Mankato Area Public Schools and the City of Mankato, Minnesota



Communication Action Plan



For More Information Contact:
Shelly Schulz
Public Information Director
Mankato Area Public Schools and
City of Mankato, Minnesota
Intergovernmental Center
10 Civic Center Plaza
Post Office Box 3368
Mankato, MN 56002-3368

Phone: 507-387-8516 • Fax: 507-387-8642
sschulz@city.mankato.mn.us

www.ci.mankato.mn.us
www.isd77.k12.mn.us



Mankato Area Public Schools
www.isd77.k12.mn.us

City of Mankato, Minnesota
www.ci.mankato.mn.us

507-387-8516 • sschulz@city.mankato.mn.us

Mankato, Minnesota

2002

Communication Action Plan

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Note: Citizens = Taxpayers = Stakeholders

Public Information Assistant
Job Description continued

- ◆ Provide counsel, guidance, and mentorship as it relates to public relations for the City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools. Basic premise is that good public relations are an attitude. It is important to create an environment that leads citizens to have faith and confidence in their government.
- ◆ Create, sustain, and manage relationships inside and outside of the City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools organizations. This may include various clubs and organizations.
- ◆ Attendance during regularly scheduled work hours.
- ◆ Effective and respectful communication and interactions with other employees, supervisors, individuals from other organizations, and citizen customers.

Additional Functions of the Job:

- ◆ Perform other related functions as assigned or apparent.

Required Knowledge and Abilities:

- ◆ Must be a self-starter.
- ◆ Must be ambitious, with the ability to follow through with the best way of completing a project, not necessarily the easiest.
- ◆ Ability and desire to work in a fast-paced, deadline-driven environment.
- ◆ Ability to work well alone or as part of a team.
- ◆ Ability to take a project from start to completion.
- ◆ Ability to effectively manage priorities.
- ◆ Ability to use Word, Page Maker, Quark, and other software programs.
- ◆ Must be a good listener.

Minimum Qualifications:

Bachelor degree in public relations, marketing, communications, or a closely related field, and at least two years work experience in a public relations field. Experience and proficiency working with word processing and desktop publishing.

Preferred Qualifications:

Experience working for a local government.

Conditions of Employment:

Portfolio required if selected for an interview. Must comply with organizational and departmental policies.

Mission and Vision



The City of Mankato is a regionally focused municipal organization responsible for delivering essential public services to its citizens and visitors.

The overall mission of the Mankato City organization is to ensure a safe and affordable environment for both citizens and visitors to prosper in everyday endeavors. As a regional center, we accept the obligation to facilitate orderly growth, economic prosperity, and the development of a unified vision among regional shareholders.



In partnership with citizens, we provide effective educational opportunities for all learners to acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to be responsible citizens in a diverse, changing, and global society.

Our vision is to continually improve our Mankato Area education system to ensure that all learners are provided with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed for them to thrive in their ever changing 21st century environment.

Our decisions will be guided both by the wisdom of the ages and the challenges of the future. We will be characterized by our willingness to be visionaries, to take bold risks, by our insistence on innovation, and by our intent to be "masters of change."

Public Information Director Job Description continued

- ◆ Ability to work effectively with co-workers, supervisors, employees, media representatives, and citizens.
- ◆ Ability to read and comprehend complex materials.
- ◆ Considerable ability to provide effective leadership and promote teamwork.
- ◆ Considerable ability to deal effectively with people of all backgrounds and to maintain positive and effective working relationships with advisory groups, City officials, and the general public.
- ◆ Considerable ability to research and analyze information, utilize resources, and develop alternatives.
- ◆ Considerable ability to see, read, and understand a variety of written documents.
- ◆ Considerable ability to use fine motor skills to write and/or type and to operate a personal computer.
- ◆ Working ability to hear and speak to communicate with a large variety of people.
- ◆ Working ability to sit for long periods of time.
- ◆ Working ability to operate a telephone to communicate with staff and the public.
- ◆ Ability to move around indoors and outdoors to photograph and conduct videotaping.
- ◆ Ability to lift and move cameras, video camera, and audio visual equipment, etc. on a continuous basis.
- ◆ Ability to work outdoors during which climate is unable to be controlled and event is unable to be rescheduled.

Minimum Qualifications:

Bachelor degree in Marketing, Public Relations, Journalism, Public Administration, or related field and five (5) years experience in related work for a local government.

Preferred Qualifications:

Minimum qualifications, plus a related Master's degree.

Conditions of Employment:

Possession of a valid Minnesota driver's license. Must comply with organizational and departmental policies.

Public Information Assistant
Job Description

Department/Division: City Manager’s Office/Public Information
Supervisor: Public Information Director
Classification: Full-Time, Non-Union, Administrative Support

Definition:
Under the direct supervision of the Public Information Director, the Public Information Assistant will provide direct guidance and mentorship for assigned programs of the City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools communications and public relations functions. The Public Information Assistant will coordinate public information programs through mediums including, but not limited to, print, video, radio, Internet, and community-based information/education programs.

Equipment/Job Location:
This position will be located in the Intergovernmental Center. Uses personal computers and general office equipment such as personal computer, photocopiers, and fax machine.

- Essential Functions of the Job:**
- ◆ Provide communications leadership in City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools organizations. This includes staying abreast of changes and developments in common practices, policies, and procedures as it relates to communication, drawing upon expertise within the profession and the community. Ensures messages are in alignment with the City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools Strategic Plans. Continues education through classes, conferences, and membership to communications organizations.
 - ◆ Function as a public information source for the City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools organizations.
 - ◆ Serve as liaison to the media.
 - ◆ Write news releases and articles for publication.
 - ◆ Plan, develop, disseminate, and evaluate the effectiveness of a variety of written publications and pieces for target audiences both internally and externally.
 - ◆ Write copy, envision creative ideas, and supervise outsourcing, including printing, desktop publishers, graphic artists, web masters, photographers, etc.
 - ◆ Work with local print, radio, and television on behalf of the City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools’ organizations.
 - ◆ Produce local government programming, which may include writing scripts, editing or supervising outsourcing of local government production.
 - ◆ Attend meetings on behalf of the City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools Public Information office.
 - ◆ Plan and organize events as needed.

Guiding Principles and Philosophy

This plan is based on the following principles and philosophy, which serve to guide its overall development:

- 1. Telling our own story versus expecting someone else to do it.**
It is the news media’s job to report news. It is the respective organization’s job to be accountable and keep citizens informed on the state of the city and schools. When residents are well-informed, they can participate more effectively in their government and make the best decisions on matters impacting their lives.
- 2. Proactive versus Reactive**
It is the intent of the City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools communication program to take a proactive approach. The idea is to plan and carry out communications to achieve goals.
- 3. Decentralized versus Centralized**
A decentralized communications system complements operating with a spirit of full disclosure. Decentralized communication is a practical way to operate in a large organization since the obvious source of information is the person who works in a respective area each day. With there being approximately 200 City of Mankato employees and almost 1,000 employees of Mankato Area Public Schools (approximately 700 full-time employees) there are potentially 200 City of Mankato communicators and marketers and 1,000 communicators and marketers of Mankato Area Public Schools.
- 4. Strong Themes versus Scattered Messages**
A communication program built on strong themes is more effective than a program with scattered and unrelated messages. Major themes are derived from strategic plans created by the Mankato City Council and the Mankato Area Public School Board. Several complimentary themes and communication priorities come from focus groups conducted with City of Mankato citizens and Mankato Area Public Schools staff. Key themes will be communicated frequently in a variety of ways, using simple repetitive messages.
- 5. We adopt Mankato Area Council for Quality’s public relations philosophy**
“Customers don’t care how much we know until they know how much we care.”
- 6. Communication needs to be appropriate but take a risk**
In addition to being factual and professional, marketing and communication messages should be easy to read, entertaining, eye-catching, positive, and imaginative to peak interest and capture the attention of the stakeholders.
- 7. Mankato Area Public Schools is committed to partnering with the City of Mankato**
on communication, wherever feasible, to avoid costly duplication to the citizens. Mankato Area Public Schools is open to communication partnerships within its geographical boundaries.



“Out of intense complexities, intense simplicities emerge.”
Winston Churchill

Public Information Director Job Description continued

- ◆ Conduct a variety of research activities, which include investigating, analyzing and preparing reports with sound analysis and recommendations for presentation to the City Council or other bodies, or for use by the City Manager in decision-making.
- ◆ Coordinate and carry out a wide variety of special projects.
- ◆ Develop and make oral and written presentations.
- ◆ Attendance during regularly scheduled work hours and outside regular hours as necessary.
- ◆ Effective and respectful communication and interactions with other employees, supervisors, individuals from other organizations, and citizen customers.

Additional Functions of the Job:

- ◆ Facilitate organizational and community groups.
- ◆ Perform other related functions as assigned or apparent.

Required Knowledge & Abilities:

- ◆ Considerable knowledge of the management principles and practices.
- ◆ Considerable knowledge of program development and management and project management.
- ◆ Considerable knowledge of effective customer services practices.
- ◆ Working knowledge of personal computers, including basic understanding of networks, hardware, and software typically used in office environments.
- ◆ Considerable ability to oversee and motivate staff and volunteers either directly or through others.
- ◆ Considerable ability to manage change and develop solutions to problems.
- ◆ Considerable ability to develop, plan, organize, implement, and monitor programs, policies, and projects.
- ◆ Skill in communicating logically, persuasively and accurately in oral and written forms with elected officials, business leaders, community organizations, and the public in general.
- ◆ Skill in communicating one-to-one or before groups for the purpose of obtaining or providing information.
- ◆ Skill in communicating programs, projects or events involving diverse groups and factors.
- ◆ Skill in investigating by locating, classifying, and interpreting a variety of information, financial, and statistical data.
- ◆ Ability to work independently and complete assignments from minimal information and under general instructions.

Background

Well-planned communications are the heart of a successful public information effort. A communication program built on strong themes is generally most effective. The primary focus is to be in alignment with local citizens. A high priority for city government and public schools is to effectively communicate with taxpayers. The purpose of this communication plan is to highlight priorities and take a proactive approach in planning and executing communication. Residents want staff responsive to their needs. Interactive opportunities with citizens and the community will be sought. Two-way communication is the core to knowing what citizens want.

Communication themes come from the Mankato City Council and Mankato Area Public School Board. The Mankato City Council and Mankato Area Public School Board are likely to be perceived as a body, not individuals. City Councilors and School Board Members share an interest in creating public perception among the people they serve. Public information efforts can be key in communicating the City Council and School Board's collective message.

City of Mankato

This communication plan is based on the City of Mankato Strategic Plan. Communication themes come from the strategic plan. The City of Mankato Strategic Plan was created from input received via citizen focus groups that represented a cross-section of the community; a large sample which consisted of 10 focus groups, approximately 12 people in each group, a citywide citizen satisfaction survey - done jointly with Mankato Area Public Schools; and staff focus group results.

Mankato Area Public Schools

This communication plan is a continued version of the first communication plan which was based on the Mankato Area Public Schools' Strategic Plan and on feedback from Mankato Area Public Schools staff. The purpose of the focus groups was for Mankato Area Public Schools staff to give input on a communication plan.

In November 1996, a general assessment of Mankato Area Public Schools internal and external communications was done. Findings, recommendations, and results from this assessment were also incorporated into this communication plan.

Communication priorities and themes are based on the Strategic Plans for the City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools.

City of Mankato Communication Goals

- ◆ Increase awareness, interest and participation of the community in their city government.
- ◆ Be accountable to stakeholders for money spent on city government by informing stakeholders of what is happening.
- ◆ Strengthen public confidence which will build trust in city government.
- ◆ Display and maintain a visible presence in the community.
- ◆ Communicate with residents of neighboring jurisdictions. Neighbors are important to the City of Mankato. Many neighbors do business in Mankato and may use city services.
- ◆ Place heavy emphasis on targeted communication themes based on current city government topics and events; and on the internal, external, and community and regional goals in the 2000-2001 City of Mankato Strategic Plan.

Mankato Area Public Schools Communication Goals

- ◆ Retain students
- ◆ Attract students by marketing Mankato Area Public Schools. Use the Marketing Mix as a guide:
Product (programs and services)
Promotion (of school programs and services)
Price (cost to participate)
Place (where school programs and services are available).
- ◆ Increase awareness, interest and participation of the community.
- ◆ Increase awareness, interest and participation of parents.
- ◆ Be accountable to stakeholders for money spent on public schools by informing stakeholders of what is happening.
- ◆ Strengthen public confidence in public schools.
- ◆ Display and maintain a visible presence in the community.

Public Information Director Job Description

Department/Division: City Manager's Office/Public Information
Supervisor: City Manager
Classification: Full-Time, Exempt, Professional
Other: The City of Mankato is under contract with Mankato Area Public Schools to provide public information services.

Definition:

Under the general direction of the City Manager, plans, develops, and implements the City's public information programs; coordinates special projects; and performs administrative, management, and technical responsibilities related to the public information programs and special projects.

Equipment/Job Location:

Office is located in the Intergovernmental Center, but this position is also required to travel throughout the community as well as outside the community as projects dictate. Uses personal computer and common office supplies and equipment.

Essential Functions of the Job:

- ◆ Develop information programs that inform the public about City affairs, operations, and activities.
- ◆ Develop information programs that maintain a visible and positive image for the City.
- ◆ Counsel the City Manager on methods of responding to situations and trends that are of public concern and assist the Manager in maintaining favorable relations with the community.
- ◆ Market and promote community-related programs and events.
- ◆ Function as a public information source for community/organization.
- ◆ Act as liaison to the media and spokesperson for the City.
- ◆ Prepare and/or review speeches, statements, reports, and testimony to be delivered before legislative, governmental, business, and community organizations.
- ◆ Prepare special interest publications, exhibits, videotapes, newsletters, new releases, flyers, brochures, promotional materials, and other public information devices for internal and external distribution as well as for use in other publications.
- ◆ Establish standards for the format and content of City publications, i.e., newsletters, media releases, bulletins, etc.
- ◆ Provide coaching and feedback to other City employees and elected officials who perform communications functions.
- ◆ Maintain current information on trends, developments, and problems concerning the City to be used in planning public information programs.
- ◆ Audit and review community and public information programs and activities to ensure maximum effectiveness.

Mankato Area Public Schools Communication Projects

Achieved

- 1. Enhance Mankato Area Public Schools' web pages.
- 2. American Education Week is an opportunity to build and strengthen partnerships between local schools and communities on behalf of students. Do a promotion and thank you to all staff in celebration of American Education Week (November).
- 3. Organize and conduct a workshop for local real estate agents (could earn continuing education credits) on Mankato Area Public Schools offerings.
- 4. Develop public schools action programming to air on local public access television.
- 5. Communicate/meet with local media representatives on a regular basis.
- 6. Create a schedule, placing the Mankato Area Public Schools display in various high traffic community locations throughout the year.
- 7. Organize inservice for support staff on their important public relations and communications role to the success of the Mankato Area Public Schools.
- 8. Focus on promotions to attract students to attend the Mankato Area Public Schools.

The Public Information office appreciates the support and interest of the many people involved in its development and who will be key to its success.

This communication plan is a document that is a basic blueprint to provide guidance. Since communication is dynamic, this plan will serve as a guide only. Public Information staff is prepared to supplement it and modify and update it as the internal and external environment requires it.

City of Mankato Key Messages & Communication Themes

(from the City of Mankato Strategic Plan)

The strategic plan is the City organization's two year blueprint. Communication themes come from this document.

Community Development

- ◆ Encourage orderly growth.
- ◆ Increase affordable housing options.
- ◆ Develop strategies for local Traffic Management.
- ◆ Improve City entranceways.

Environmental Sensitivity

- ◆ Storm water runoff management.
- ◆ Improve appearance and accessibility to the Minnesota River.
- ◆ Enhance city cleanup, refuse and recycling.

Regional Development

- ◆ Develop brand to expand economic base.
- ◆ Maximize on partnerships with Minnesota State University, Mankato and South Central Technical College, North Mankato.
- ◆ Employ strategies to obtain additional road funding.
- ◆ Better develop regional legislative strategy to be more effective.

Community Leadership

- ◆ Intergovernmental Cooperation.
- ◆ City Council Decision-Making Process.
- ◆ City Leadership Evolution.

Community Involvement

- ◆ Maximize on citizen involvement.
- ◆ Enhance internal flow of information.
- ◆ A commitment to public information and education efforts.
- ◆ Provide outstanding customer service.

Livability

- ◆ Enhance and improve quality of public safety services.
- ◆ A commitment to organizational and community diversity.
- ◆ Maintain and improve older neighborhoods.
- ◆ Maintain a commitment to the library.

Mankato Area Public Schools Key Messages & Communication Themes

From the Mankato Area Public Schools Strategic Plan:

- ◆ An innovative philosophy supports life-long learning; to that end, learners must be given choices, develop self-worth, and be challenged accordingly. Importantly, Mankato Area Public Schools value diversity.
- ◆ Diverse instructional methods are utilized to improve learning.
- ◆ Integrated technology provides learners with the best education possible.
- ◆ Community and business partnerships maximize ownership to schools. Four out of five households do not have students in Mankato Area Public Schools although they are funding public schools. Inviting the community in to tour and use buildings and facilities is a priority.
- ◆ A commitment to communication with the stakeholders, and marketing the Mankato Area Public Schools is important as it holds the schools accountable to the stakeholders. In times of declining enrollments, it is important to retain and attract learners.
- ◆ Human resources are Mankato Area Public Schools most valuable asset.

From Staff Focus Groups:

Mankato Area Public Schools rank in the top one-third nationally as winners of the "Gold Medal School Award" and have been nationally recognized with the "School Match" award* for meeting the needs and expectations of families choosing schools.

- ◆ Market Mankato Area Public Schools as a whole education system; i.e., the sum of its parts equal the whole. Schools unite to form one organization.
- ◆ Communication is a primary mission and vision of Mankato Area Public Schools.
- ◆ Everyone is welcome to come to Mankato Area Public Schools; i.e., invite the community in.
- ◆ It takes a community to educate a child.
- ◆ Education is our business. We strive to improve both students and ourselves today and tomorrow.
- ◆ Innovative choices are available throughout Mankato Area Public Schools.
- ◆ Diversity in school population strengthens our schools and prepares learners for the global society.
- ◆ Learners are the focus of Mankato Area Public Schools.
- ◆ Public education opens doors to opportunities.

* According to *Expansion Management Magazine* 2001. *School Match of Columbus, Ohio, 2001.*

City of Mankato Communication Projects

Achieved

- ___ 1. Utility bill inserts (not limited to):
 - a) Utility rates, January
 - b) Garbage and recycling service, January
(recycle education funding partnership with Blue Earth County)
 - c) Here to Serve You brochure - February
(City/school partnership)
 - d) Spring clean-up service - April
 - e) City calendar photo contest, June
 - f) City landscape contest - June
 - g) Fire open house - August
 - h) Snow emergency service - November
 - i) Christmas tree recycling service - December
- ___ 2. Provide monthly "Mankato City Update" action programs on local public access television.
- ___ 3. Hotsheet projects - up to two direct mails during each year (complicated, current-event topics lend themselves best to this communication tool.)
- ___ 4. Conduct citizen focus groups as needed.
- ___ 5. Expand city web pages to include at least one interactive opportunity.
- ___ 6. Monitor citizen's input via customer service software.
- ___ 7. Communicate/meet with local media representatives on a regular basis.
- ___ 8. Provide communication support to targeted causes such as the U.S. Highway 14 Partnership of which the City of Mankato is a member.
- ___ 9. Be a Steering Committee member of the Mankato Area Sesquicentennial to advance Mankato's key messages commemorating the settlement and celebrating the vitality of Mankato today.
- ___ 10. Develop staff training on media relations.

The Public Information office appreciates the support and interest of the many people involved in its development and who will be key to its success.

City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools Joint Communication Projects

To avoid costly duplication, Mankato Area Public Schools and the City of Mankato have made a commitment to partner on public information. Although we provide different public service, we serve common stakeholders. In summary, partnership goals are to:

1. Avoid duplication, save money and share costs. We cannot afford all of the separateness in local government.
2. Problem solve among overlapping jurisdictions.
3. Promote together the value of education and city services.
4. Become more efficient because we are informed on each other's issues.

Joint Communication Projects

Achieved:

- 1. "Here to Serve You" brochure. To be distributed in City of Mankato utility bills (8,500 quantity) and distributed in new resident packets throughout the year.
- 2. Include Mankato Area Public Schools dates in the City of Mankato calendar published annually.
- 3. Mankato Minute - 12 month public information television campaign - Six months to be dedicated to Mankato Area Public Schools education topics and six months dedicated to City of Mankato service topics. All "Mankato Minutes" will also air on the local public access government channel #12.
- 4. Joint valid citizen satisfaction service delivery survey.
- 5. Crisis communication team also known as "Area News Consortium" will continue to meet. A local group of Public Information staff that meets to be communication prepared in the event of a local crisis. Crisis communication team members include Public Information staff from:

◆ American Red Cross	◆ Minnesota Department of Transportation
◆ Blue Earth County	◆ Minnesota State University - Mankato
◆ City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools	◆ Nicollet County
◆ Immanuel St. Joseph's Hospital - Mayo Health System	◆ South Central Technical College
- 6. Develop joint City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools media handbook to assist as a training tool for staff to effectively work with the media as a method to inform the public.
- 7. City of Mankato/Mankato Area Public Schools' newsletter to the taxpayers to be distributed April 1 and September 1 of each year.
- 8. Organize and market Mankato City Council and Mankato Area Public School Board "Citizen Tour."
- 9. Monthly radio talk show program – speak on behalf of both service organizations, i.e. city and schools.
- 10. Plan open house at intergovernmental center offering a "Quality of Life" drawing.
- 11. Be a member of the Greater Mankato Marketing Initiative to create a marketing campaign for the Mankato Area which includes:
 - a. Research - inventory strengths to identify target audiences.
 - b. Develop a marketing plan.
 - c. Implement marketing plan and integrate into city and school communication efforts.

Mankato Area Public Schools Strategic Plan Short Range Visions

1. We will have a specific person in charge of public relations.
2. We will market to specific population groups to ensure they are aware of our programs and their value to the community.
3. We will have a marketing plan in place to attract and retain all learners.
4. We will have a meaningful involvement of key stakeholder groups, such as seniors, parents, businesses, and higher education, among others.
5. We will have a feedback mechanism in place to monitor program effectiveness and obtain stakeholder input with respect to their needs.
6. All district stakeholders will be aware of our mission and vision for the future.
7. We will have public recognition mechanisms to recognize learners and staff achievement.
8. Negative information will be followed with corrective action, and inaccurate information will be immediately countered with correct information.
9. We will have feedback and input mechanisms in place that will allow us to constantly update our mission and visions, monitor program effectiveness, and identify stakeholders needs.
10. Stakeholders will be very well informed regarding educational issues.
11. Stakeholders will be supportive of public education and will perceive it as a high value investment.

Strategic Plan Communication & Marketing Recommendations

Communications and Marketing:

1. Assign a specific person to be in charge of district public relations and communications.
2. Develop and implement a public relations plan that will:
 - ◆ Increase community involvement and support.
 - ◆ Help stakeholders to value education.
 - ◆ Clearly communicate the district's strengths and needs.
 - ◆ Clearly communicate the district's vision and mission.
3. Ensure that we have feedback and input procedures that will contribute to the ongoing revision of our visions, strategies, mission, and concurrently monitor program effectiveness and identify stakeholder needs.
4. Develop and implement a marketing plan that will:
 - ◆ Attract and retain learners.
 - ◆ Solicit and maintain involvement of key stakeholders.
 - ◆ Market to specific population groups to ensure they are aware of district programs and district value to the community.
5. Develop and implement a system to monitor the accuracy and quality of district communication efforts.
6. Develop and implement a plan to publicly recognize learner and staff achievement.

Mankato Area Public Schools Strategic Plan Results

Key Result Area #5 in Mankato Area Public Schools Strategic Plan is:

Communications and Marketing:

Planning assumptions (facts, beliefs, values or statements of strong commitment):

1. We need more community involvement and support.
2. Four of five households in our community do not have students attending Mankato Area Public Schools.
3. All stakeholders must feel that education is important and worth significant investment.
4. We expect competition for learners to increase from non-public educational sources.
5. We must reach out to population groups that are isolated from school district activities and concerns (senior citizens, taxpayers without children in schools, etc.).
6. We need to communicate our many outstanding strengths to stakeholders throughout the Mankato area.
7. We must be aware of and responsive to diverse family structures.

Mankato Area Public Schools Staff Focus Group Exercise

Some basic background information was presented to staff participating in the focus group exercise:



The Mankato Area Public School system employs almost 1,000 people and serves thousands more. Approximately 80% of the community does not have children in the public school system. It is important to find ways to communicate the value of public schools to all taxpayers in the community.



Mankato Area Public Schools face increased competition through private schools, charter schools, and open enrollment. To attract and retain students, we need to communicate our strengths and provide a clear understanding of offerings to stakeholders.



A public information /communication program, which directly addresses the Mankato Area Public Schools Strategic Plan goals, can increase public awareness and build trust and support for Mankato Area Public Schools. The Mankato Area Public School Board and superintendent invited the input of all school employees to help build a communication program.

Mankato Area Public Schools Staff Focus Group Questions

Individual responses were received from Mankato Area Public School staff through the large sample focus group exercise. Responses, along with the goals and objectives of Mankato Area Public Schools Strategic Plan, provide the strategy and basis for this communications plan. Questions asked were:

1. List the good things happening now in the schools that could help demonstrate the strengths of Mankato Area Public Schools.
2. What is the best way to get information about the good things happening in the schools, to the right person at the right time, so it can be shared with the community? What process or method do you recommend?
3. List the types of educational issues we should be communicating to the public.
4. List all the benefits you hope to gain by a communication/marketing action plan.
5. What are the best ways to bring education issues to the public's attention so Mankato Area Public Schools can fully inform stakeholders?
6. What needs improvement to gain the benefits of a communication/marketing plan?
7. How, specifically, can we judge the effectiveness of communication efforts? When will you know the process is a success? (For stakeholders within the community? For people outside the community?)
8. What are the issues involved in increased competition for students from non-public schools, other public schools, and charter schools that could be addressed partially with a communication and marketing plan?
9. What needs to be communicated to attract and retain learners for Mankato Area Public Schools?
10. List joint project ideas that could be cosponsored by the City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools, which might benefit the schools (classic examples: newsletter, calendar). The City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools serve, basically, the same taxpayers. Each system is instrumental in the long-term success of the other. Joint communication projects are an efficient use of tax dollars.

This plan is intended to serve as a guide to achieve the communication goals of the City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools over the next two years. Like any plan, it will need updating as circumstances change.

Public Relations Philosophy



We need to treat citizens with respect and dignity.

It is important to create an environment that leads citizens to have faith and confidence in the City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools.

We agree with the Mankato Area Council For Quality philosophy that:

"Customers don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

About the Organizational Logos



The logo is the official symbol for the City of Mankato and Mankato Area Public Schools organizations, thus it is important that each are used generously and properly. The logos are the most important way in which citizens/taxpayers identify the City of Mankato or Mankato Area Public Schools' documents and property. Therefore, it is preferred that the logo be used on all documents; i.e. the City of Mankato logo be used on all internal and external communications, and the Mankato Area Public Schools' logo be used on all internal and external communications.

The logos respectively designate the City of Mankato or Mankato Area Public Schools as a whole. It is acceptable to use individual city department logos with the City of Mankato logo or school logos with the Mankato Area Public Schools logo because this gives individual city departments and individual public schools an opportunity to display their pride and identity.

A logo and identity system style guide for the City of Mankato or Mankato Area Public Schools can be obtained by calling the Public Information Office at 387-8516.



Target Audiences

External Audiences:

- ◆ Taxpayers - Mankato Area Public Schools is designated as School District #77 which serves the communities of Mankato, North Mankato, Eagle Lake, and Madison Lake (represents approximately 26,409 households and businesses):

Mankato	18,858
North Mankato	5,306
Eagle Lake	1,124
Madison Lake	1,121
Total	26,409

All taxpayers are stakeholders of Mankato Area Public Schools.

- Parents
- Non-parent taxpayers:
80% of the households do not have learners in Mankato Area Public Schools

- ◆ Blue Earth County residents - open enrollment may help counterbalance declining enrollment
- ◆ Senior citizens
- ◆ Day care providers
- ◆ Youth
- ◆ Business community
- ◆ Realtors
- ◆ Service clubs
- ◆ New residents
- ◆ Opinion leaders
- ◆ Prospective residents
- ◆ The region
- ◆ Visitors
- ◆ Ministerial Association

Internal Audiences:

- ◆ City and schools staff (every staff person in each organization is important. A decentralized communication system compliments openness and provides the most practical means of communicating information).

Communication Toolbox

Here are some valuable tools used to communicate and market messages. This is also dubbed as the public information staff's "creation station." It is necessary to always be on the lookout for new and innovative tools and technologies to communicate more effectively.

Presentational Software

Video - including Digital Video Disk (DVD) medium

Web Pages - Internet



Newspaper advertising

Post-it notes on daily/weekly newspapers

Direct mail pieces - Hot Sheets, News Notes

Newsletter



Special events (such as tours, open houses)

Flyers - Posters - Jingles

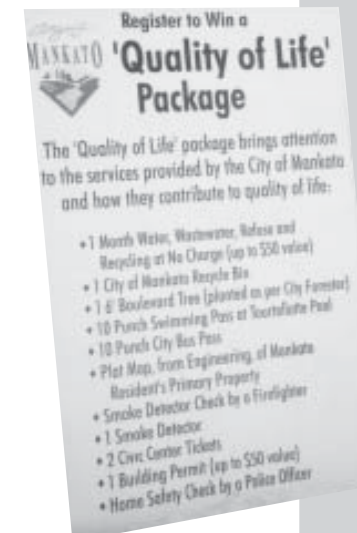
Basics:

- ◆ Write for the audience, write in plain talk.
- ◆ Simple, repetitive messages are best using a variety of tools.
- ◆ Consistent themes.
- ◆ Appropriate, but eye-catching, positive, imaginative, and entertaining communication campaigns.
- ◆ Make communication available to all citizens.
- ◆ It's about being honest.

Public Service Announcements

News conferences - news media kits

News media: radio, television, newspaper



24-hour telephone lines

Direct Contact/One-to-One

Direct response to all viewpoints

Neighborhood meetings

Displays

Interactive television

Public Access television

Utility bill inserts

Electronic mail

Letters

Specialty items

Brochures and print projects



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